



SIMPLE STRATEGIES TO
OPTIMIZE DIGESTION
+
HEAL YOUR GUT

KRISTEN BARRETT, FDN-P | WWW.EPICHEALTHLLC.COM




Welcome

*I'm Kristen Barrett, Functional
Diagnostic Nutrition Practitioner
and founder of Epic Health, LLC.*

Good digestion is the foundation of health, which is why I've created this guide for Optimizing your Digestion, + Healing your Gut.

Enjoy!



Many root causes of disease and dysfunction can be traced back to the gut. The food we eat and how well we can digest it is what provides the nutrition to build every cell and hormone in our body.

Addressing the health of your digestion and mucosal barrier should be a top priority for any health protocol.

Signs your gut needs some help:

- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Acid Reflux
- Gas + Bloating
- Inflammation
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Joint Pain
- Autoimmune Conditions
- Skin problems
- Brittle hair or nails
- Anxiousness
- Stubborn weight loss

DIGESTION BASICS

Good health starts in the gut and you cannot live a vibrant life or have hormonal balance without a healthy digestive system. Any dysfunction happening here will lead to more symptoms throughout your body.

- The digestive system protects us from infections and foreign substances
- Its where nutrients enter into the body so they can be carried to every cell
- It communicates directly with the brain, but if communication is lost it can work independently as well
- The surface area of our small intestine is about 2700 square feet, which is about the size of a tennis court
- Foul smelling gas gets its smell from the fermentation of bacteria
- The stomach produces a new coat of mucus every two weeks
- The small intestine is the most highly regenerative organ in the body and can regenerate its lining every 5 – 7 days

DIGESTION IS A PARASYMPATHETIC PROCESS

Many people think digestion starts in the mouth, but it actually starts in the brain. Digestion is controlled by the parasympathetic nervous system, (otherwise known as “rest & digest”).

Our nervous system can be divided into two categories: our parasympathetic system and our sympathetic system.

Our parasympathetic system is known as our “rest and digest” system. It’s our relaxed state. It increases blood flow to our digestive organs and stimulates saliva, enzymes and stomach acid which are all responsible for breaking down food. It also increases peristalsis which is the mechanical function in which our body moves food through the intestines and waste out of our body. Parasympathetic is where healing and digestion take place!

In contrast, our sympathetic nervous system is our “fight or flight” system. It’s designed to keep us safe from threats. To do this, it increases blood flow to our muscles so we can move forcefully and quickly, constricts our pupils to strengthen our vision, and raises our blood sugar to provide glucose (energy) to our body so it can move into action and either fight or run away from the threat.

Our body will not activate its digestive system when it’s in this sympathetic state. It will prioritize all our body’s function to fighting the threat. That means digestion will have to wait because it is not a lifesaving activity. Because of this, one of the BEST things you can do to support your digestion is to always eat when you’re in a relaxed parasympathetic state so your body can “turn on” it’s digestive juices.

Good health starts in the gut and you cannot live a vibrant life or hormonal balance without a healthy digestive system.

TIPS FOR OPTIMIZING DIGESTION

- ✓ Slow down and relax before sitting down to eat
- ✓ Take 3 deep breaths before each meal
- ✓ Eliminate distractions at meal times and don't eat while stressed!
- ✓ Chew your food thoroughly. Chewing provides the chemical breakdown of food through its production of saliva that's loaded with enzymes which break down food. It also provides the mechanical breakdown with our teeth. The more you chew your food the less work your making the rest of your digestion work!
- ✓ If possible, give yourself 20 minutes to relax after a meal. Allow your body to continue the digestive process.



THE INTESTINAL LINING

The intestinal lining (also referred to as the mucosal barrier) is the lining of your small intestine.

Once your mouth and stomach has done its job, the broken-down food will slowly be released into the small intestine. This is where 90% of your nutrients will be absorbed into your bloodstream.

The intestinal lining of your small intestine has two main jobs:

1. Allows properly digested fats, proteins, and carbohydrates to pass through the lining and get absorbed into the bloodstream where it will be carried throughout the body.
2. Keeps foreign substances, pathogens, bacteria, toxins, and large undigested food particles out of the body.

Within our intestinal lining we have a single layer of very thin, delicate cells (about 1/3 as thick as your eyelids), called Epithelial cells. These cells are held together by really tight junctions.

But because these cells are so delicate, they are easily inflamed, and this inflammation breaks apart the cells leaving microscopic fissures.

These fissures allow undigested food particles and other toxins to pass through the gut lining into the blood stream which is why we call it “leaky gut”.

This is a massive security breach! You can imagine the kind of dysfunction that can lead to other areas of the body when our mucosal barrier becomes comprised. Things meant to stay out of the body get in triggering even more inflammation and disrupting the gut flora leading to even more dysfunction. Metabolic chaos and systemic inflammation ensues leaving you with to symptom after symptom after symptom.

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR MICROBIOME

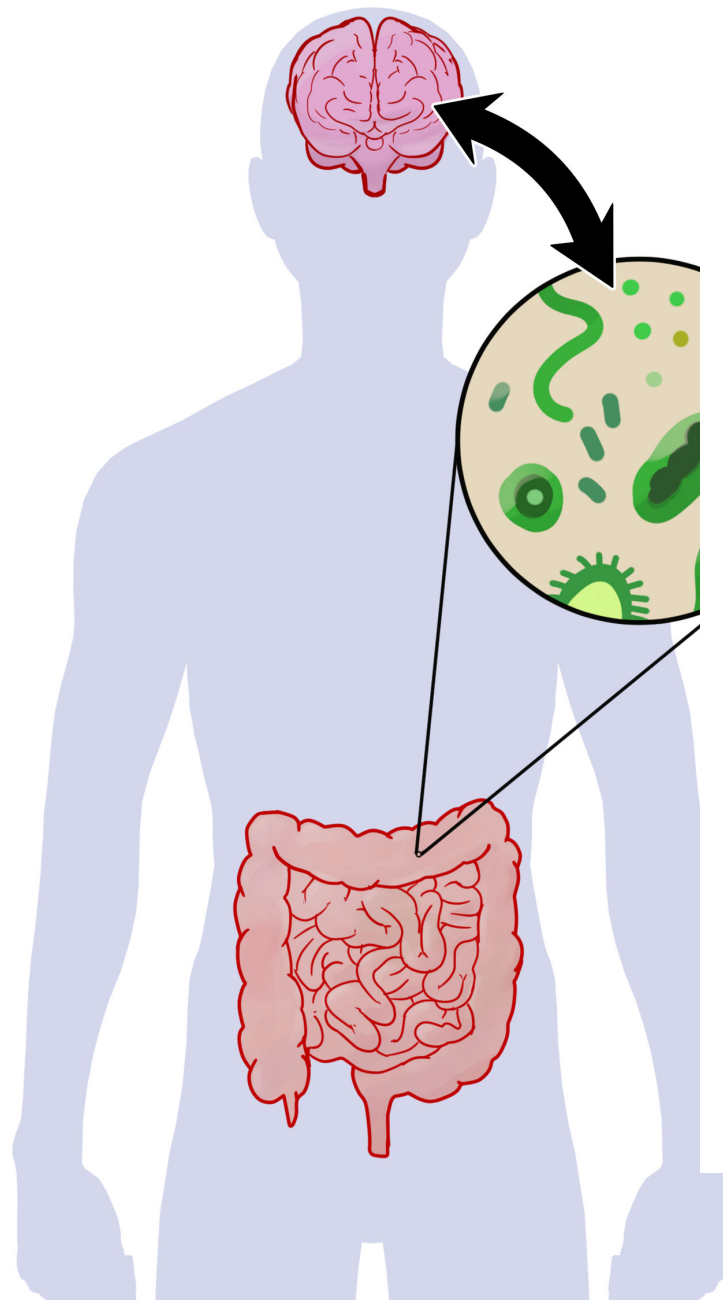
The human body is a complex ecosystem that includes TRILLIONS of microbes we share our body with. Without these microbes you would not be able to break down nutrients or keep your immune system in check.

Bacteria lives in all parts of our body that are exposed to the environment including skin, mouth, genitals, and gut.

There are approximately **10 times more bacterial cells living inside of us than there are our own human cells**. That means we are more bacteria than we are our own cells!

Your microbiota is *imperative* to your immune health, teaching your immune system which cells to fight and which cells to leave alone. They convert vitamins to it's usable form and help in the production of hormones. They aid in the digestion of food and communicate directly with the brain. It can alter neurotransmitters and manipulate our food cravings. Our microbiome controls our appetite, taste receptors and even our moods!

Without these bugs, we could not survive!



MICROBIOME

The food we eat
influences our gut
microbiome

Scientists are finding the
microbiome is
responsible for over
6,000 different metabolic
functions in the body.




PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

By now you can see how vital your digestion, intestinal lining and microbiome are to your overall health and why you can't address any chronic health condition without addressing the gut!

Doing so will never make you well. It will leave you in the frustrating cycle of trial and error as you're merely chasing symptoms around your body.

So let's put this knowledge into action!



Without proper digestion, a healthy intestinal lining
and a diverse population of gut bacteria, you will not be
able to reach or maintain epic health.

The 5 R's

REMOVE

REPLACE

REPOPULATE

REPAIR

REBALANCE

REMOVE

Processed foods, industrial seed oils, refined sugar food sensitivities, toxins, parasites, heavy metals.



Next level tips: remove Gluten, Dairy, Soy, Vegetables Oils Artificial Sweeteners, Alcohol

Reduce your exposure to toxic chemicals in your food, household products and skin care products

Consider doing an MRT Food Sensitivity Test and a GI Map Stool Test to identify pathogens or infections residing in your gut.

REPLACE

Replace with whole foods, high quality protein, vegetables, and resistant starches

Eat a **variety** of vegetables every day to help support your microbiome diversity

Have a good quality protein at each meal



Next level tips: consider adding in digestive enzymes to support the proper breakdown of food

REPOPULATE

Repopulate the microbiome with foods that keep the bugs happy!

Eat a diverse range of foods!

Eat more fiber. Gut bugs love to feast on this.

Include fermented foods such as sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir and full fat plain yogurt

Add in resistant starches. Foods such as plantains, legumes and cooked then cooled (you can reheat them again to eat but the cooling off period is important) rice and potatoes.



Next level tip: Take a high-quality spore based probiotic

REPAIR

Begin to repair the gut lining cells and mucosa and reduce inflammation and keep your gut a hospitable host to the ones we want and UNhospitable to those we don't.

Eat foods rich in amino acids such as bone broth and high-quality proteins

Essential Fatty Acids found in nuts, seeds, fish



Next level tips: Intermittent fasting

Gut healing supplements such as L-glutamine, gut healing supplement blends, collagen, aloe vera, marshmallow or slippery elm

REBALANCE

Your lifestyle habits greatly influence your digestive system and overall health. Addressing health without talking about lifestyle will only get you so far.

Move your body – walking, hiking, biking, dancing, yoga

Establish a regular sleep-wake cycle and practice good sleep hygiene

Prioritize getting at least 7 hours of sleep each night

Incorporate a meditation or breathwork practice. I like to use the Insight Timer app for guided meditations

Get fresh air daily

Spend time with family and friends

You can incorporate different phases at the same time and many of them cross over to other phases. For example, removing food sensitivities and pathogens is in the removing phase, but it also initiates the repair phase.

And remember if you're not rebalancing through a change in lifestyle, your gut-healing diet will only get you so far!

THANK YOU

If you have any questions about supplements mentioned, or learning more about functional lab testing, don't hesitate to reach out!

If you'd like to talk about how we can work together and get to the root cause of your health issues, I'd love to hear from you!

Kristen



kristen@epichealthllc.com

www.EpicHealthLLC.com

